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AUTHOR	Davidson, Florence H.; Davidson, Miriam M.
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ABSTRACT

Long-term studies were undertaken to attempt to link children's prejudices with their stages of moral development. If a relation could be shown between a low moral stage and prejudice, it might be possible to devise educational strategies to raise children's moral stages and strengthen their moral development and consciences. A broad cross-sectional study of 154 students in several city and suburban schools around Boston (Massachusetts) and a long-term study of 22 students who, when they were in the fifth grade in the 1970s, had engaged in role-playing exercises about prejudice demonstrate how complex the causes of prejudice and arrested moral growth are. Case studies of 10 of the fifth graders show that much adult-like prejudice is actually a temporary tactic to preserve self-esteem. It is demonstrated that education can increase respect for ethnically different people. The second half of the book focuses on the means by which parents and others can take responsibility for changing prejudice and moral judgment in children and adolescents. How whole-school reform can bring about children's desire to be helpful and seek approval is covered in detail, as is the assertion that recognition of the value of social order should be a goal of high schools. (Contains 442 references.) (SLD)

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